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HOLOCAUST POEMS

by

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

It should be understood,  
Whatever mistakes of English language  
Are in this poems  
They are written from heart and soul  
Through experiences of a Holocaust survivor,  
Who never was educated in English language.

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

When I die  
Nothing in this world will happen or change  
Only few hearts will tremble  
Like flowers in the morning dew.

Translation from poem by Czech  
Poet, Jiří Volker

To my sons and to my family, with all my love,  
Mother  
March 1982

MY POEMS

To my sons RONIE and MIKE,  
*Ron & Mike Hersh*

---

NEVER AGAIN!

---

MY PRAYER

Dear God,

Despite the horrors I lived through,  
I had strength to pull my soul and heart  
From the darkness to light.

I became wiser,  
Even if I make mistakes sometimes.  
I lived through disappointments, love and anger  
I learned to be understanding and more tolerant  
To my fellow man.

You, God, let me see the ugliness and  
The beauty of this world,  
You took from me once the biggest  
Gift of man... Freedom, but gave me back so much more,  
Liberated me, and gave me love of my family.  
You let me deal with all my pain  
And let me come out a better human being,  
And taught me to like myself.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
January 18, 1982

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



COMING TRAGEDIES

Why are you crying little girl?  
The summer is bright and the sun is shining  
The smell of the lilacs is in the air  
And the butterfly is free

You are sitting on the attic steps  
And your eyes are full of liquid pearls  
Your heart is heavy like a piece of marble

You are in the spring of your life little girl  
Why is there winter in your heart?  
How do you know what is coming for you little girl?  
The mystery is called life.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
March 19, 1983

*Rose Herstik*

AUSCHWITZ 1942

Yesterday, the world was full of hope for me  
I heard the birds singing,  
I could smell the flowers in the air  
And the sunshine touched my face

Today.

The winding road is built slowly  
The air is filled with screams and tears  
The aching backs and tortured bodies  
Wearing rags in the ice cold winds  
The empty stomachs crying loudly  
Hearts jump in fright from biting dogs

The dogs jump at you and tear your flesh  
With last strength, you pick up the stones  
To build a bloody winding road

New people are coming  
You hear the children cry

How would you dare to straighten up your  
Lowered and painful head

The crematorium is so close by

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

In 1942 I went to the concentration camps.  
Auschwitz-Birkenau-Rawensbrück-Malchow

*in 1942*

*Auschwitz - Birkenau  
Death March Rawensbrück - Malchow  
Liberated May 9 end of war 1945*

Rose Weiss Herstik

LOOKING BACK

---

LEAVING HOME

The afternoon wore a gray flannel cape.  
The boots stopped at the door.  
The shrill noise of the doorbell  
Touched the heart with iron tongs.

My grandmother's cold hand warily opened  
The door.  
The huge swastika was surrounded with  
Bloody red.  
I put on my coat, embraced my loved ones  
And looked back.  
My photographic mind pushed a lever  
To keep a picture forever in my soul  
And heart.  
And the world disappeared like we never  
Had been there.

THE TRAIN

The train was filled with sad eyes.  
The hands were holding on to window rims,  
Like little dead birds with broken wings.  
Hope flew away through the window  
Like a mist which disappeared into the skies.  
White faces were dominated by eyes  
Filled with liquid diamonds.  
My father's outstretched arms  
Are holding me, even now, in my dreams.  
Evening tightened its cape  
And suddenly it was black.  
The train whistle blew.



Rose Weiss Herstik

### THE LAND OF HORRORS

The train whistle blew,  
The wheels started rolling.  
Horror cut deeper into our frightened hearts.  
The windows were adorned with heavy bars  
Instead of curtains of lace.  
We are huddled together, rolled into one fright,  
A hand of iron and ice gripped in our minds.  
An unknown place of unexpected horrors  
Pulled our train like a magnet  
To the lights of electrified bars.  
They shone like the Jewish star of our destiny.

### DESTINATION: CONCENTRATION CAMP

The train stopped its rolling feet.  
The air filled with the mist of our crying eyes.  
We marched to the gates,  
Welcomed by stomping heavy boots and bayonets  
And barking dogs and curses.  
The gates opened, the bayonets started to dance  
On unsuspecting heads.  
Screams of pain filled the night air.  
Souls were flying to heaven,  
Their white wings stretching to freedom.

Cannons from the guard towers around the camp  
Were shooting belts of fire.  
Nude white bodies standing in a line of melting snow  
Were building a pale pearl chain.  
A big door opened to let the bodies in.  
Like a monster, it swallowed the long lines.  
Another door spit the bodies out,  
With broken spirit and dead eyes.

Rose Wais Herolite

THE START OF THE END

A cruel siren screams into tired ears.  
Muddy bodies with enslaved hearts  
Rise from their beds of torture  
Where the rats and body lice have their feast.  
The bodies rise to the always cursing presence  
Of guards in gray, armed with sticks and  
Shrill insults, and to barking, biting dogs.  
Running blood mixes with mud and rain.

"CELL APPELL! CELL APPELL!"

It is the order to form ranks and stand at attention.  
It is the motto any time of the hated days and nights.  
It is to stand in line for hours  
With wet clothes frozen to our skin, in total silence.  
But they cannot stop the rumbling from our bellies.  
The crumbs of bread filled with worms,  
And the muddy soup  
Never fill the stomach and quiet it,  
But only let it protest in crying noises.

Pyramids of bodies are stacked high, ready to fill  
The burning, always hungry mouths of the crematorium.  
Our tired bones, with hollow eyes and shaven heads  
Welcome the presence of death.

Time stands still, it is always night.  
The torture and the death and the pain  
Are ever present.  
It is not remembered how it is  
To feel human.  
We are like the lowest of animals.  
We are in a stupor always.

Has God forgotten His children?  
Or is He trying their iron will and belief?

---

Suddenly, from a forgotten time,  
Night opens its eyes to the shining sun,  
And a magic key cuts through our chains.  
Freedom!  
Sweet Freedom!

## THE HOLOCAUST

FEAR

I remember the dark days  
When the people on the streets  
Looked at me with hate.

The yellow star adorned my coat  
I was the outcast for no reason at all.

I had to run and hide  
The Jewish star followed me  
To the end.

The black boots and swastikas  
Followed me where the dark days started  
With no end in sight.

Torture and death followed  
Day by day  
With no hope and  
Almost no end.

The nightmare had a name  
It was connected with human cruelty and shame  
Auschwitz.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
April 1996

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



THEY WHO DON'T BELIEVE

They who close their hearts,  
And petty minds  
They who live in limited and closed worlds  
They who have their souls closed in iron breasts  
They who are prejudiced and want to be blind  
They don't want to be touched by truth  
They feel guilty and are afraid of their own dreams  
They don't want to see the truth  
That Holocaust has happened

I hope they never will be touched by bloody hands  
Their children never have to scream in their  
Sweaty dreams  
Because then they would realize  
That Holocaust should never have happened.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
January 27, 1979

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



I SEE MYSELF

When I look inside myself  
I see my naked soul  
I was terrorized too often  
My trembling heart often reached my throat

It never gives me comfort  
That I was not alone  
The long forgotten hours  
Haunt me in my sleep  
And I feel I am forever  
In a jail of my own.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
June 3, 1983

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

THE TORTURE OF MY SOUL

The pictures of past time  
Are imbedded in my mind and heart  
My bruised heart and soul  
Are wounded forever  
The words forever mean a lifetime.  
People surround you  
But you are always alone with your pain.  
Your face has to show courage  
And strength.  
Will it ever get better?  
Time passes  
Toward the end of my time.  
I have to be  
For once, for myself.

Rose Weiss Herstik

May 5, 1993

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

THE YEAR 1945

The gloomy fires stopped burning  
The hell closed its doors  
That was the end of war  
The star of hope was born  
The doomed came out of hell  
New hope embraced their hearts  
The lives which almost perished  
Suddenly came alive  
The air was full of sunshine  
The birds started to sing  
The voices of the children  
Had a silbery ring  
Freedom, Sweet Freedom  
The most precious of all life

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

Rose Weiss Herstik

THOUGHTS OF A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Sometimes I feel  
I have to remember the lost and half forgotten times  
I desperately would like to recapture my youth  
And past happiness  
But my vision is clouded by pain and horror  
I can see myself  
Looking like a skeleton, wearing rags  
And living in a bottomless pit  
Stripped of all human dignity  
The pictures flashing in my brain  
Causing me sleepless nights  
And I try to chase them away in vain  
Then I open the windows and doors of my mind and heart  
To let in love and understanding  
The love builds around my bruised soul  
A protective wall  
The present world reminds me often of the past  
That violence and pain is still here with us  
And never ends  
Then I feel sad, and sitting passive in my chair  
Not knowing how to change the present world  
And my tortured soul is screaming  
Please God, never again.

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

Rose Weiss Herstik

December 7, 1981



THE CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

To my beloved sons Ronie and Michael Herstik.

We tried so hard to shield them from our pain and denied them the knowledge of our past. But their ears were listening to our whispering and our broken words. Their eyes saw the streaming tears, we couldn't always hide. They did feel the tragedy in the air. We gave them love and financial things to soften our guilt we felt. They were smart and knew the guilt should not be ours. They grew us to be strong and they have a commitment to give their children a better world. They know, Holocaust never again!

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

THE SURVIVORS

Some of us came back from death and destruction  
With broken hearts and nightmares  
But our unbroken spirit was able to triumph  
Over hate  
We brought the message of truth  
To the world about Holocaust  
With the strength of our spirit  
We started from scratch  
We filled our lives with love not hate  
Your message to your children  
Be aware of precious freedom and liberty.

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

Rose Weiss Herstik

April 10, 1989

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

A desire was burning in my soul  
To reach the world with words  
My tongue was too heavy and tied  
The miracle called pencil  
Was put into my hand  
The wide leaf of paper  
Opened to me a new world  
My soul is healing  
It helps to spread the word  
The medicine is selfish  
It helps only my soul.

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

To my Michael, Mom.

A lazy summer afternoon  
Sitting on the sofa  
I pressed a small chubby body to my heart  
My son, Michael's big eyes  
Looking at my mouth  
I was telling him a story  
My heart was melting with love  
I wanted to hold on to his little hand  
To be pressed forever to my heart.  
Nothing if forever  
It is just a word  
Eerie, like memories  
They always stay in our hearts.

Rose Weiss Hersik

Rose Weiss Hersik



My beloved son Ronie

Time is rushing us.  
But memories stay with us.

I still remember when I was a young woman  
Twenty-eight years old,  
Holding a precious bundle in my arms.  
That precious little bundle  
Became a wonderful, responsible  
Human being, a father himself.  
Life has a way to heal  
Even the worst pain.  
But never let you forget.  
With time,  
Even the worst memories soften.  
I wish for you  
That from now on  
You should build up  
Until long old age  
The most wonderful memories  
With your beautiful family.

Happy Birthday  
With all my love, your Mom.

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*  
*October 13/94*

HAPPY TIMES

To my son Ronie for his 30th birthday.

I clasped your little hands  
And my heart slipped into them.  
The brown eyes and sweet face  
Giving me joy forever.

Thirty years ago,  
I hold you,  
For the first time in my arms  
My heart melted like snow in sun  
And you were forever a part of me.

I loved the patter of your tiny feet  
And the rambling noise  
Of your toys around me.  
The time progressed  
Four little hands  
And always torn knees on the jeans  
Kept busy my days.  
I felt happy to be endangered  
From yours, and your brothers  
Wooden guns and water pistols.  
The time flew like water in the river  
And grew into a big stream.  
The nights were surrounded with books you studied.

Suddenly you disappeared  
Into your world.  
Left a void for me  
To reemerge to be you.

The respected grown-up you  
I started wondering what happened  
Where flew the time.  
But the sentimental  
Nostalgic impressions  
Of four little hands  
Are bedded in my heart forever,  
And my love just grows with passing time.

Happy Birthday my darling,

From Mom.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
October 13, 1979

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

MIRACLES

In the 50 years of my life  
The world changed in many ways.

The tide of time  
Changed its course.

The years soften the pain  
Of bad memories.

But remembering is forever  
The age makes you wiser.

Your children suddenly  
Are adults

In the winter of your life  
A sweet miracle happens,  
Joy, forever.

Grandchildren, twins!

Sweet dolls, Alexandra and Gabriela

Rose Weiss Herstik  
November 1994  
2 o'clock in the morning

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

WHEN I LOOK INTO THE MIRROR

I see with pain my wrinkled face  
The eyes lost their shine of youth  
My looks turn inside of me  
In my heart and soul

I am proud to say  
The years didn't touch my youthful soul  
I always try to understand  
The youth and the times I live in

My years and wisdom  
Carries me through foolishness of youth  
And then I see in the mirror  
The benefit of time in my wrinkled face.

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

Rose Weiss Herstik  
March 1983



THE DREAM OF A MOTHER

The world of dreams and imaginations spins around.  
It is the magic kaleidoscope, between the laundry  
and the dirty floors!

The dreams are about sandy beaches, where  
nights full of stars have their stop.

The years slipping through, like sand through  
a strainer.

The memories are colorful lights, like stars  
apart, between the years.

Nothing stops time,  
Just one day you see the growing images of yourself  
and you think;  
Life just starts, and has no end.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
1972

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

YOU ARE WITH ME

In deep dark of the night  
My eyes avoiding sleep  
My memories remembering you  
From long time ago  
Dashing and handsome  
With a smile on your lips  
Exposing your brilliant white teeth  
You are holding my hand  
Your eyes are full of love  
I feel young once more  
And want to press my hungry lips to yours  
To feel your assuring kisses  
I am vulnerable  
And so lonely without you  
In the deep dark of the night  
I feel your presence with me  
You standing before my eyes  
Assuring me  
That you are always with me.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
July 28, 1992

*Rose Weiss Herstik  
after the Death of my  
beloved husband*

JUST BEING HUMAN!

The human being is in his soul never just one.  
He is the everyday practical, angry, busy and  
Loving.

He is the secret poet in his heart  
Or sentimental fool

He is his own friend and his own enemy.  
He is sweet and tender and an everyday nobody.  
Sometimes, he is full of mistakes,  
But he is a human being,  
Always the important one.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
September 27, 1976

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

It is May  
I am looking at the violets  
The petals are pure silk  
How can it be  
So much beauty  
In the cruel and violent world.  
Sun, and stars  
An rainbows  
Murder and mayhem  
Hunger and poverty  
On one world together.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
August 25, 1995

*Rose weiss Herstik*



FRIDAY EVENING

The house is cold and lonely  
The sabat candles are blinking so sad.

Where went the laughter and love?  
Suddenly I am sitting alone  
My soul and heart are gripped with ice cold hands.  
The children are grown,  
Have their lives to live.

You my darling mate  
Left me to be by myself.  
My years carry me closer to my fate  
And then one day we meet again.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
February 10, 1995

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

I WISH

If a miracle would happen

And the world would be a perfect place  
There won't be no more wars and hate.

All the people would smile at eachother

The world would have a new name  
Tolerance, Brotherhood and Love

Rose Weiss Herstik

February 25, 1995

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

NEW HOPE

The weather is stormy  
The leaves falling from the tree  
Like years of my life,  
The green leaves turn brown.  
Suddenly there are just the hollow branches  
There will come new season  
When the tree will blossom new generation  
And new hope.

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

THE HOPE DISAPPEARED

So many people around me  
I am talking and smiling  
And why do I feel so alone?

My heart is surrounded  
In a chamber of ice in my chest  
The ice will never melt again  
Without a loving embrace.

Only my dreams I feel  
The love that was  
And won't return again.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
March 7, 1995

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



RESTLESS NIGHTS

Are filling my life  
Lonliness can't be healed.

The old age  
Does not let me  
Look to far in the future.

Even if my heart  
Does not want to believe  
The big change,  
What I see in the mirror  
Is proof to me  
The clock of life is ticking  
Fast away.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
April 20, 1994

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

How can I go on  
Saturday nights

Lonely evenings  
Torched nights  
To remind myself  
There is no future anymore  
Have to remind myself  
There are children  
And sweet grandchildren  
Thanks and be grateful  
But my heart is divided  
Love for them is strong  
Lonliness is painful  
Go on and on until the end.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
September 23, 1994

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

OLD AGE

You've done your best  
To stay young at heart  
Go with the stream of life  
You have your wisdom  
Which grew with time.  
But don't look much to the future,  
There is none.  
And the final stage  
Is the sadness of it all.  
Look back what you have accomplished  
Do with the rest  
The best you can.

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

It is May  
I am looking at the violets  
The petals are pure silk  
How can it be  
So much beauty  
In the cruel and violent world.  
Sun, and stars  
And rainbows  
Murder and mayhem  
Hunger and poverty  
In one world together

Rose Weiss Herstik  
August 25, 1995

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



### LONELINESS

How we hate you and underestimate you!  
Yes, you give us misery, heartache and pain  
Sometimes, even loss of life,  
Because, we cannot bear you anymore.

But, what about our ungratefulness to you?  
You can make us ambiguous.  
You can cleanse our souls.  
You can make us unexpected artist or poets  
Which we, without you would never have been.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
September 1974

PESACH\*

I am remembering,  
The small gray-haired woman with the kind  
smile on her face.  
The queen of the Seder  
My beloved grandmother!  
The preparing of the Seder,  
The excitement of the days!

The little cups for the children, filled with  
honey sweet wine!  
The grown-ups filled with expectations of the  
evening, what a night it was!

The nostalgic moments come back  
When the Pesach is coming  
Only no one is here anymore!

Rose Weiss Herstik  
March 1976

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

\*This is a transliteration to English of  
the Hebrew word for Passover.

I IMAGINE

When I would be rich!  
And I would do what I wanted to!  
I would sit and read the whole day long,  
And maybe write too.

I would paint a little and do needlepoint!  
I would travel a lot; that's what I would love to do!

To see the world, the poor, the rich,  
And help where I could!  
To clear the shadow, to let in the sunshine  
In the world  
That's what I would love to do!

I am not rich; the time is not always mine.  
But I have my dreams, and they are mine.  
It is more than some rich do!

Rose Weiss Herstik  
April 5, 1976

THE GREAT THINGS

I always wanted to do.  
I never did.

I dreamed of being a great singer!  
The voice strong and sweet;  
The room full of enchanted people;  
But I never did!

I dreamed of being a great painter;  
My paintings full of color and life;  
But I never did!

I dreamed of being a politician;  
Change the world! It would be just peace;  
But I never did!

Then I did become a mother;  
My dreams can one day be fulfilled.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
January 25, 1972

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



36TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

36 years of lifetime  
Caring and Sharing  
Passionate love and passionate fights  
The wonder of new born babies in our arms  
Worries and sleepless nights

Struggling and building a future  
Happiness seeing children's first steps  
And achievements  
Proud watching them grow  
And become the good human beings they are

Suddenly you turn your head  
And look behind you  
Where are the years rushing behind us  
Life is a rolling train

Old age already here  
Sickness and worries and the dark nights  
You are scared  
Look in the mirror  
Only the heart in your breast is the same  
The face is a stranger  
Which you hardly can accept

Holding on to your mate's hand to the end

Was it all worth while?  
Just think.

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE CHANGED?  
IN ONE LIFETIME  
IT WAS ALL THERE  
PAIN, LOVE AND ADVENTURE  
CAN YOU ASK FOR MORE?  
  
GLORIOUS LIFE, FILLED WITH ALL

Rose Weiss Herstik

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

## HOPE

After dark night comes always day light

Sometimes the days are rainy  
But the sunshine follows the rain

The strengths in us  
Is like a armor of a warrior

We are stronger than we ever suspect

The life passes us by  
Mixed with rain and rainbow

Grief and hope follow each other

If you fill your life with love and tolerance  
With understanding for your fellow man

You find love everywhere.

When you approach late age and wisdom  
Life will teach you

Everything you lived through  
Mixed good and bad

Was worthwhile for you to live for.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
April 1993

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

## YOUTH

The morning dew  
Sprinkles the flowers with liquid diamonds  
There comes the charmer Sunshine  
To steal the diamonds  
Drys them out like tears of a child,  
And turns the roses in blooming queens  
The busy bees are coming with the sweet kisses  
To glorify the summer  
The air is full of melodys of singing birds  
My soul if full of hope  
The heavy burdens are in the dark  
Corner of the coming winter.

Rose Weiss Herstik

1995

*Rose Weiss Herstik*



THE SENIOR CITIZEN DANCE

The night is dark  
The rain is fine mist of pearls  
Behind the doors of the  
Social Hall  
Bright lights and music  
Touches the mood and heart  
And soul.  
The age loses importance  
The body is suddenly light  
And turns easy to the melody in dance.  
The heart is forever young  
And is forgetting  
About limited time  
In future.

Rose WEiss Herstik

May 27, 1994

*Rose weiss Herstik*

ONE OF THOSE DAYS

The day started  
The sun is hiding behind the dark skys  
Three years when you left me  
Never to return.  
How come,  
The wound in my heart never has healed.  
I always try to show a smiling face.  
The days are long and the nights  
Never end.  
Every evening, I say good night to you  
Before I am closing the door to the room  
Where you died.  
I am pretending you are in the house with me,  
And the loneliness  
Is not so hard to bare.  
I know there comes a time  
When we will meet again.

Rose Weiss Herstik  
June 15, 1995

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

LATE IN LIFE

Sometimes you have to come  
Almost to the end of your life  
To understand  
It is like to feel  
That your standing on the top of  
A mountain  
And you look down  
To see before you eyes your life  
You can see the wrong and the right  
In your life  
And like a ~~shack~~ player  
To play the game  
And make the right moves  
It may be late, it may be in time  
When you are lucky  
You see clear all  
If the gift of right or wrong  
Is in your soul  
If you made the right moves  
Time travels slowly towards the end  
Why can you see so late  
You could have done more  
But it is the end of the game  
Your moves were too slow.

*Rose Weiss Herstik*

Rose Weiss Herstik

September 3, 1995